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Harding, Warren Gamaliel, Pres. U. S., 1865 - 1923

ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT HARDING

AT THE

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION, MARION, OHIO,

JULY 4, 1922.

22-26614

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS: It is exceedingly good to come home and meet with you again and join you in the centennial celebration of the founding of Marion. Frankly, it would be preferable to come simply as a Marionite and speak as one, because it is easily possible for me to feel a peculiar intimacy toward such an occasion.

I can not justify a claim to any great part in making the Marion of to-day, but as a newspaper worker for more than a third of a century I have done a lot of cheering, which is no less essential to the forward movement in a community than it is in football or baseball. Amid the cheering and boosting I did my share of observing and recording, and I could relate things interesting to me, probably interesting to you, of Marion, but they would seem rather trivial to that larger community which is habituated to expect some form of broadcasting to every presidential utterance.

An interesting reminder of the inescapable responsibility for presidential utterance came to me a year ago. I was on a brief vacation in the mountains of New Hampshire, and my generous host said we must go to the near-by village, which had been his boyhood home, and meet the people who would be assembled. We motored down the mountain; we had a most agreeable meeting, and I spoke extemporaneously for probably 15 minutes. Sixty days later there came to my desk a newspaper published in Peking, China, with a verbatim reprint of the speech.

Of course, there was nothing in it which I did not say sincerely. No one fit for public service will ever be guilty of that.

My thought is that, ordinarily, there is time and place for particular speech, but in the presidential office all times and all places are very much alike. There may be a justified pride in the manifest interest of all our own people and all the world being interested in what the United States Government is thinking or saying, but I confess being human enough to wish to talk of the intimate things relating to Marion, without misconstruction or misapplication.

There is much of the latter. Maybe it will not be unseemly to relate an instance. Several weeks ago, when the returning tide of industrial activity made the time seem opportune, I invited some 40 or 50 captains of the great iron and steel industry to dine with me, to confer about the abolition of the 12-hour work-day. I did not choose to proclaim the purpose in advance, because I dislike the tendency to promise excessively and accomplish inadequately. Imagine my surprise, yea, my amusement, to read in an important metropolitan newspaper that I was dining the steel barons to "shake them down" for the deficit in campaign funds of 1920.

It would be good to talk about Marion, just among ourselves. I know nothing more interesting to any man than his own community. If he is not interested, he is not a good citizen.

A century sounds like a long while at first impression, but after all it is only a little while. There are communities in the world 10 or 20 centuries old not half so important in world activities to-day: perhaps they have contributed to human progress infinitely less in all their time than Marion has in one century. Nay, in a shorter time than that, for the Marion we boast of has been really only a half century in the making.

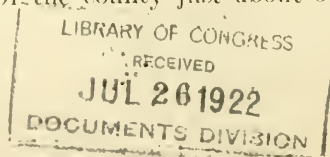
I mean no disparagement of the older and earlier citizenship of sturdy qualities which pioneered the way. Theirs was a great and highly essential work in blazing the way for the present-day civilization. It required strong men and noble women to turn wilderness into worth-while habitations. Malaria and ague sorely tried human bodies even though souls cheerfully resisted.

General Pershing has spoken of the fearless colonists, and we ought to revere them for their surpassing bequest of liberty and nationality, but the builders of the West, the men and women who marched with the "westward star of empire," were no less brave, no less heroic, and were more prophetic. They sensed the greater possibilities, of which the colonists had not dreamed.

I said a century seemed a long time in which to achieve, and is yet only a little while. The Nation lacks four years of boasting a century and a half, but discovery came four centuries ago, and a century and a half of colonial development preceded the national beginning.

It was my fortune to participate in the tercentenary celebration of the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, a year ago, and there was the constant reminder that New England had preceded us two centuries in the making of America.

But there is a rather more personal reason for the "little-while" view. I became a citizen of Marion 40 years ago, almost to a day, and have been a resident of the county just about 50 years. And



it all has the seeming of being but a little while. Yet I could almost qualify as a pioneer.

The Marion I first saw in 1882 had less than 4,000 people, but my first impression was that of very much a city, in which I feared I should be hopelessly lost. The industrial awakening had not been given notable expression. Edward Huber had begun the industrial march, but he was still struggling, as most industries struggle, before they are firmly founded.

Probably Marion was as countrified as I felt, but I did not know. It was my viewpoint, my limited vision, which kept me from knowing. You see, I came from the farm and village, and the county seat of 4,000 loomed big in my vision, because I had seen nothing greater. Surely it looked ten times as large as it does to-day, though the Marion of to-day is ten times larger than then and twice ten times as important in its relationship to the world of human activities.

This confession is meant to have application. How important is the viewpoint to all the impressions and problems of life. The villager goes to the great city, is confused by the high tide of activities, and awed by the complacency of those accustomed to them, and so reveals himself as provincial, and is so designated. But those who proclaim him are oftentimes no less provincial, because they too have the narrow vision; they do not know the village and country life, which is ever freshening and swelling the current of our national life.

The early Marion had only the viewpoint of the county civic and trading center until industrial genius flashed on the screen the picture of factory production, balances of trade in larger circles, and the attending advancements incident to greater activities. It is not for me to detail the expansion and transformation. We are an outstanding industrial and commercial community to-day, and I join you in a very great pride in the Marion of 1922, and wish for it accentuated growth, magnified importance, and larger social, educational, moral, and patriotic attainments in the century to come. It would little avail to record more material enlargements. The consciousness of mental and spiritual attainments, readily fostered by material growth, is the real compensation to be striven for.

Let me turn my thoughts to the natal day of the Nation. One hundred and forty-six years have passed since the prophetic beginning, and it will be a patriotic thing to stop for retrospection, and introspection, and circumspection, to take stock about our keeping of the legacy bequeathed by the founding fathers.

In our international relations all is well. They are securer, to-day, with more assuring prospects of peace than ever before in the history

of the Republic. New guaranties have recently been added by the very process of exchanging viewpoints and bringing the spokesmen of great nations to the conference table, and for the exchange of views, and to resolve to do together those fine and nobler things which no one nation could do alone.

Frankly, we have a broader viewpoint than the founding fathers: we must have, because human progress has altered our world relationship, but we have held firmly to all the fundamentals to which they committed us. We can not be aloof from the world, but we can impress the world with American ideals. I mean to say it, because it is seemly to say it, the world believes to-day in American national unselfishness as never before, and recognizes our commitment to justice to be no less resolute than our determination to preserve our liberties. Even Russia, toward whom we remain aloof, except in sympathy and a very practical proof thereof, looks upon America as friend and example.

But let us turn specifically to introspection, take stock among ourselves. Materially, we have surpassed the wildest dreams of the inspired founders. I saw the 15-starred flag the other day, the flag of 1812, unfurled over Fort McHenry, during the attack in which Francis Scott Key wrote "The Star-Spangled Banner." Ohio made the fifteenth star. You can little guess the contrast between the blue field with 15 stars and the same field with the 48 glittering stars of to-day, all fastened by popular faith and brightened by popular hope.

We are great and rich and powerful as to States and sections: we are in the full concord of union. This great organic law has been preserved and its ambiguities removed. Where there has been enlarged Federal authority, the States have wished it so. The Constitution has been amended to meet the popular will. Our representative form of constitutional government is responsive to the will of the majority, responsive to the expression of deliberate public opinion. It must be so to endure. Majorities, restrained to the protection of minorities, ever must rule. The Constitution and the laws sponsored by the majority must be enforced. It does not matter who opposes. If an opposing minority has a just objection, the rising tide of public opinion will change the law. There is no abiding liberty under any other plan.

I mean to sound no note of pessimism. This Republic is secure. Menaces do arise, but public opinion will efface them. Meanwhile government must repress them. The eighteenth amendment denies to a minority a fancied sense of personal liberty, but the amendment is the will of America and must be sustained by the Government and public opinion, else contempt for the law will undermine our very foundations.

The foremost thought in the Constitution is the right to freedom and the pursuit of happiness. Men must be free to live and achieve. Liberty is gone in America when any man is denied by anybody the right to work and live by that work. It does not matter who denies.

A free American has the right to labor without any other's leave. It would be no less an abridgment to deny men to bargain collectively. Governments can not tolerate any class or grouped domination through force. It will be a sorry day when group domination is reflected in our laws. Government, and the laws which government is charged with enforcing, must be for all the people, ever aiming at the common good.

The tendencies of the present day are not surprising. War stirred the passions of men and left the world in upheaval. There have been readjustments and liquidations, and more remain to be made. In the making there has been the clash of interests, the revelations of greed, the perfectly natural tendency to defend self-interests. It has developed groups and blocs and magnified class inclinations. But the readjustment is no less inevitable, and it is world-wide. It is the problem of human kind. Your Government has sought to aid, with patience, with tolerance, with sympathy. It has sought to mitigate the burdens. It has sought the merging of viewpoints to make the way easier. It believes the America of our opportunity and unchallenged security affords the way to solution.

In war we give all we possess, all our lives, all our resources, everything, to make sure our national survival. Our preservation in peace is no less important. It calls for every patriotic offering, because dangers from within are more difficult to meet than the alien enemy.

My one outstanding conviction, after 16 months in the Presidency, is that the greatest traitor to his country is he who appeals to prejudice and inflames passion, when sober judgment and honest speech are so necessary to firmly establish tranquility and security.

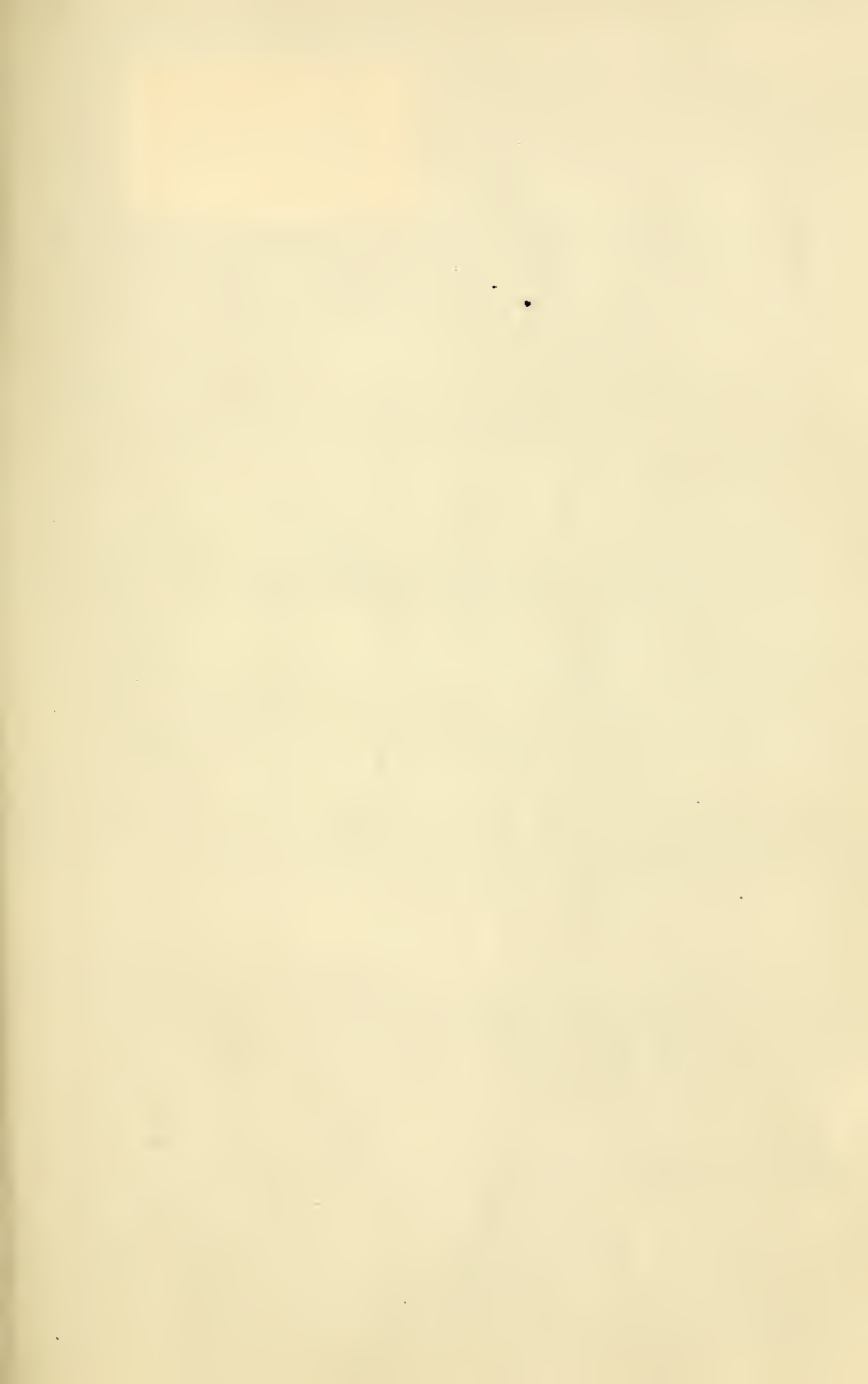
A few days ago I chanced to see in a home paper a quotation from Will Carleton's story of "The First Settler." I heard Mr. Carleton read it in the old city hall 35 years ago. It was the recital of hasty and unheeding speech to the first settler's wife, when he found the cattle had strayed. Stirred by his reproach she started to find them, brought them back, sank exhausted on the cabin floor, where he found her dead body after his all-night search. In his remorse, he felt the guilt of his killing words, and in his reciting the story he said:

Boys flying kites haul in their white-winged birds.
 But you can't do that way when you're flying words.
 Thoughts unexpressed may sometimes fall back dead,
 But God Himself can't kill 'em, once they're said.

I leave you that thought on this centennial day, because its lesson will save many a wound, many a cross current in the happiness of the community; it will save many a menace in the national life.

I have no fear about the Republic. We are not only stronger, but we are morally better than when we began. If there is seeming excess of exploitation, profiteering, dishonesty, and betrayal, it is only because we are grown the larger, and we know the ills of life, and read of them more than the good that is done. I do not wonder that the ignorant and illy informed are made restless by the magnified stories of public abuses and proclaimed privilege. We need truth, only the truth, the wholesome truth, as the highest aid to Americanization and the manifestation of highest patriotism.

America will go on. The fundamentals of the Republic and all its liberties will be preserved, and Government must maintain the supremacy of law and authority. Under these liberty has its fullest fruition and men attain to reveal the glory of liberty's institutions.



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